

**University of Melbourne Student Union
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group**

MINUTES

2:00 pm, 16.05.2019

Meeting 2 of Semester 1

**Advocacy & Legal Divisional Office,
Level 4 Union House**

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal
Minutes: Nadia Streistermanis, Advocacy & Legal

1 Welcome and Procedural Matters

1.1 Apologies

None.

1.2 Attendance

Dominic Roque Ilagan, Alanna Smith, Emily De Rango, Alan Yang, Vanessa Stanton, Isabelle Butler, Paul Lewis-Hornsby, Phoebe Churches, Nadia Streistermanis, Thea (surname not recorded).

1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes

Confirmed.

2 A & L Service Reports

2.1 Advocacy case work

Course Academic Progress Committees (CAPC)

University has announced some changes to the policy for Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) students as part of a trial. Student on a 'probationary' status won't be offered a chance to meet with the committee, unless the CAPC determines they are at risk of an outcome of termination of enrolment. Only those students will be invited to meet. Advocacy staff met with staff from Academic Progress team to discuss this. Other faculties may end up following suit. Policy changed in October but wasn't implemented at the end of last year. Students in this scenario will have a short turn around for written submissions (five days). Mid-year CAPC will therefore be busy. Second round of meetings are not happening until after semester starts.

Misconduct

Some good news – educative responses to first time/trivial breaches of examination rules has been formally recognised by the Academic Board. While this is great news, it is still highly problematic that these Academic Board decisions aren't communicated back to the faculties. It's very frustrating.

In his casework, Paul noted that he has been seeing a 'one size fits all' approach to Academic Misconduct penalties. The majority of Misconduct Committees decisions which have been poorly considered have been overturned by the Board, but it is frustrating that these decisions are still consistently happening at the faculty level.

Emily asked if there has been any further talk of training for staff who sit on Misconduct committees. Phoebe said there hasn't been, and that it is sometimes hard to know where to start. Even in instances where appeal outcomes are being fed back to faculties, changes are rare.

2.2 Legal case work

Service Delivery Update

Alan provided an update on the service. The first few months had been quiet, but once semester started the flood gates opened. Lots of tenancy matters, 98 enquires in total. Lots of people getting into new rentals or leaving old ones, that's when problems occur. More motor vehicle accidents (MVAs), and more fines than usual too.

PTV Travel passes

The Legal Service has purchased a number of subsidised PTV passes to provide to needy students for free. Nine students in March in three weeks met with the Financial Counsellor to get the free passes. Not surprisingly, 30-day passes are more helpful for students than 7-day passes. This is a pilot program for the State Government, and if it continues, we will order more 30-day passes. The passes can be used on rural buses and outside Zone 2, but only for Myki activated buses (and these passes are paper). We're one of the only organisations that offer the 7-day and 30-day passes, instead of 1-day passes. One student who received a pass is living in regional Victoria and she can't afford to live closer to campus, so she was eligible for this program, but the bus was only Myki machine activated so she could not use the pass. It costs the student \$30 each day to get here

There is an Infringement Working Group that we are a part of, and that gives us an avenue to pass on feedback about the pass program.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

UMSU Legal Service is watching the development of the partnership-based student accommodation sprouting up all around campus. It is part of the university's MAP plan to guarantee university provided accommodation to all undergraduate students. The main concern is that these accommodations are exempted from the Residential tenancies Act and therefore can and do provide contracts with terms that are far less protective than residential leases. For example, these places can terminate student's enrolment/withhold results due to outstanding accommodation fees. It is happening in other states - especially Sydney where it is further advanced - and we are concerned that some of the very poor outcomes for students in the Sydney PBSA will start to be seen here too.

Isabelle has drafted a Brief to Counsel, waiting to hear back on the ways we can proactively challenge or mitigate potential harm for students in these arrangements.

Other Legal Service activities

UMSU Legal has delivered several short presentations to various groups – Chinese students association, international welfare OBS, training with C&S (Vanessa)

UMSU Legal has passed the NACLC Accreditation phase two, report still to come.

We updated our website (Isabelle) new content on tenancy, criminal matters, and infringements.

Financial counselling

The pilot officially finishes tomorrow but the service has been extended to the end of the year when it will be formally evaluated. Vanessa has done training for 140 Clubs & Societies executives, including streaming training live to Werribee.

In the last quarter Vanessa developed and sent materials to GSA clubs too.

Vanessa has assisted on two MVA cases, where client has accepted liability. Vanessa helped to negotiate the settlement and working out payment plan.

The Financial Counsellor network meeting was also hosted here.

2.3 Projects and initiatives

2.3.1 SHARE Advisor Pilot - update

2.3.2 Financial Counsellor Pilot report back

Another pilot program is commencing soon: the SHARE Advisor. Bridging the gap for the victim/survivors of sexual harassment and assault to report, focusing on making a report to the University and/or the police, and the way complaints are currently handled. Looking not just at the gap in the student experience, but the cause of that gap.

We have offered the position to someone with a great deal of experience in the field, working at Victoria Police on issues of reporting and training the Police on how to take reports from victim/survivors. Experience in restorative justice and working with men. Shifting the focus from victim focused prevention to look at cultures that allow offenders to get away with it.

The SHARE Advisor is starting in late July – 2 year pilot. It is not replicating the role of the University's Safer Community Program, but rather looking at the gaps where students are experiencing problems with reporting.

If this generates more requests for support, then we will look at how to fund another position.

3 Reports from Student Office Bearers

3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

None.

4 Other Business

GSA

Emily (GSA) gave an update. She discussed how an email went around to FBE grad students about external tutoring services and how that can constitute as misconduct. Also reports of tutors tutoring in other languages.

Concerns about MGSE's new policy for grad student requiring them to send them a complete draft of their thesis, two months before due date.

GSA Clubs experiencing problems with sexually harassment among committee members. GSA looking for UMSU assistance with their implement Clubs Sexual harassment policies.

5 Next Meeting

TBC

6 Close

2.51pm

Membership:

Executive Officer & Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

2 representatives elected by and from the Education Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the Welfare Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the PoC Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the UMSU International Committee;

2 representatives from GSA;

Education (Academic Affairs) Officer(s);

Indigenous Officer(s);

Welfare Officer(s);

President, UMSU;

Secretary, UMSU;

President, UMSU International;

Vice-President (Education and Welfare), UMSU International; and

Members of the Student Representative Network.